(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps being taken by the Central Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) Fluctuation in the population of wildlife is a natural phenomenon. There are no reports to indicate continuous sharp decline in the population of endangered species in general. However, over the last few years, sharp decline in the population of three species of vultures i.e. White-backed vulture, Slender billed vulture and Long billed vulture have been reported.

(c) It had been the constant endeavour of the Central and State Governments to develop the habitat of the wildlife so that a viable population of wildlife is maintained. Apart from the implementation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, India is also a signatory to many International Conventions aiming at the conservation of wildlife. Financial and technical assistance for habitat improvement, strengthening of infrastructure, communication systems, census, research, eco development, etc. are also provided to the State Governments for the conservation of wildlife under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes;—"Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries", "Project Tiger", and "Project Elephant".

Preservation of forest cover and environment

473. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the vision of late Prime Minister-Shrimati Indira Gandhi and Rajeev Gandhi advocating the need to have sanctuaries, national parks and tiger reserves, helping in regenerating forest cover in the country, being adequately fulfilled;

(b) if so, whether Government are following this ideology for supporting the cause of preserving forest cover and the environment being strictly adhered to; and

(c) if so, why the six tiger reserves situated within 250 kilometer of Nagpur, have been ignored and whether the funds allotted towards their upkeep settlement of villages inside or on the periphery of these tiger reserves, sanctuaries, etc. been properly utilized?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Protected Areas (National Parks and Sanctuaries) have increased from 426 (109652 sq.km) to 597 (156119 sq.km.) since 1988, as on 01.01.2007.

(c) The six tiger reserves situated around 250 km. from Nagpur [Kanha (Madhya Pradesh), Satpura (Madhya Pradesh), Pench (Madhya Pradesh), Pench (Maharashtra), Tadoba-Andhari (Maharashtra) and Melghat (Maharashtra)] have been provided funding support under the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Project Tiger. The details of funding support provided to these tiger reserves including utilization done by them during the last three years is provided at Statement.

Statement

Details of funding support provided to tiger reserves

Sl. No.	Name of Tiger Reserve	Release 2003-04	*Utilization 2003-04	Release 2004-05	*Utilization 2004-05	Release 2005-06	*Utilization 2005-06
1.	Kanha	282.86	231.36	197.50	203.867	241.00	246.576
2.	Satpura	97.92	92.21	170.00	178.745	100.00	149.215
3.	Pench (MP)	68.97	65.86	97.43	78.24	128.63	130.87
4.	Pench (Mah)	97.19	121.67	87.77	88.805	75.00	77.711
5.	Tadoba-Andhari	471.00	470.00	75.00	30.045	63.07	70.685
6.	Melghat	60.00	74.92	93.183	89.405	165.00	165.36

Apple orchards in Himachal Pradesh

474. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the apple orchards in Himachal Pradesh are losing ground as cement manufacturers are offering crores of rupees in return for its limestone wealth;

(b) whether it is also a fact that till a decade ago, Himachal Pradesh had consciously kept the cement industry at low priority due to environmental concerns despite its vast deposits of limestone; and